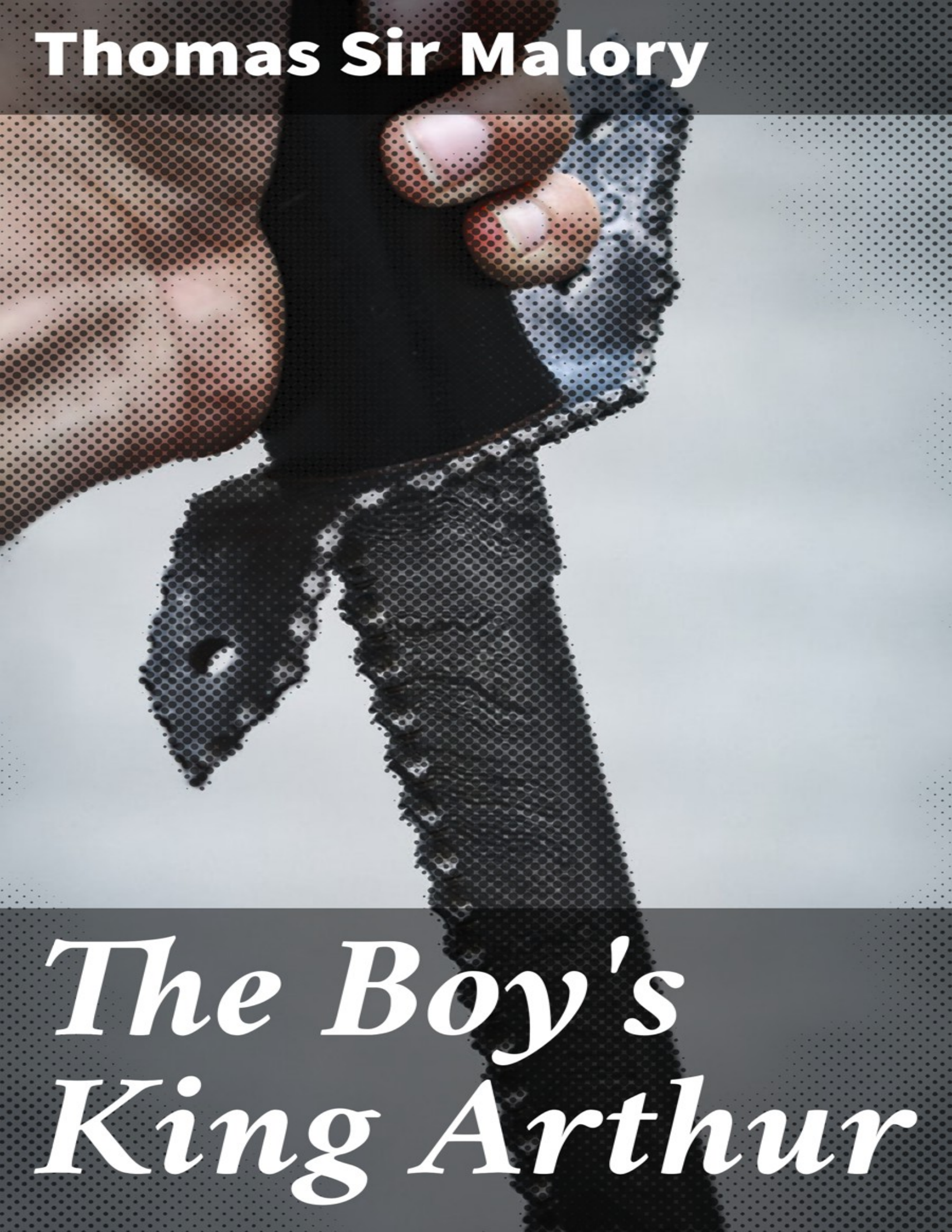


Thomas Sir Malory



*The Boy's
King Arthur*

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The Boy's King Arthur

**Sir Thomas Malory's History of King Arthur and His
Knights of the Round Table**



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BOOK I

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OF KING ARTHUR

It befell in the days of the noble Utherpendragon, when he was King of England, [that there was born to him a son who in after time was King Arthur. Howbeit the boy knew not he was the king's son. For when he was but a babe] the king commanded two knights and two ladies to take the child bound in rich cloth of gold, "and deliver him to what poor man you meet at the postern gate of the castle." So the child was delivered unto Merlin, and so he bare it forth unto Sir Ector, and made an holy man to christen him, and named him Arthur; and so Sir Ector's wife nourished him. Then within two years King Uther fell sick of a great malady; [and thereof he died]. Then stood the realm in great [danger] a long while, for every lord made him strong, and many weened [*thought*] to have been king. [And so, by Merlin's counsel, all the lords of England came together in the greatest church of London on Christmas morn before it was day, to see if God would not show by some miracle who should be king.] And when the first mass was done there was seen in the church-yard, against the high altar, a great stone four-square, like to a marble stone, and in the midst thereof was an anvil of steel, a foot of height, and therein stuck a fair sword naked by the point, and letters of gold were written about the sword that said thus: WHO SO PULLETH OUT THIS SWORD OF THIS STONE AND ANVIL, IS RIGHTWISE KING BORN OF ENGLAND.

So when all the masses were done, all the [lords] went for to behold the stone and the sword. And when they saw the scripture, some assayed [*tried*] such as would have been king. But none might stir the sword nor move it.

"He is not yet here," said the archbishop, "that shall achieve the sword, but doubt not God will make him to be known. But this is my counsel," said the archbishop, "that we let purvey [*provide*] ten knights, men of good fame, and they to keep this sword."

And upon New Year's day the barons let make a tournament for to keep the lords together, for the archbishop trusted that God would make him known that should win the sword. So upon New Year's day when the service was done the barons rode to the field.

And so it happened that Sir Ector rode to the jousts, and with him rode Sir Kay, his son, and young Arthur that was his nourished brother. [But Sir] Kay had lost his sword, for he had left it at his father's lodging, and so he prayed young Arthur to ride for his sword. "I will with a good will," said Arthur, and rode fast after the sword; and when he came home, the lady and all were gone out to see the jousting. Then was Arthur wroth, and said to himself, "I will ride to the church-yard and take the sword with me that sticketh in the stone, for my brother Sir Kay shall not be without a sword this day." And so when he came to the church-yard Arthur alighted, and tied his horse to the stile, and so went to the tent, and found no knights there, for they were all at the jousting; and so he handled the sword by the handles, and lightly and fiercely he pulled it out of the stone, and took his horse and rode his way till he came to his brother Sir Kay,

and delivered him the sword. And as soon as Sir Kay saw the sword, he wist [*knew*] well that it was the sword of the stone, and so he rode to his father, Sir Ector, and said: "Sir, lo here is the sword of the stone; wherefore I must be king of this land." When Sir Ector beheld the sword, he returned again and came to the church, and there they alighted, all three, and went into the church, and anon he made Sir Kay to swear upon a book how he came to that sword.

"Sir," said Sir Kay, "by my brother Arthur, for he brought it to me."

"How gate [*got*] you this sword?" said Sir Ector to Arthur.

"Sir, I will tell you. When I came home for my brother's sword, I found nobody at home for to deliver me his sword, and so I thought my brother Sir Kay should not be swordless, and so I came thither eagerly and pulled it out of the stone without any pain."

"Found ye any knights about this sword?" said Sir Ector.

"Nay," said Arthur.

"Now," said Sir Ector to Arthur, "I understand that you must be king of this land."

"Wherefore I?" said Arthur.

"Sir," said Ector, "for there should never man have drawn out this sword but he that shall be rightwise king of this land. Now let me see whether ye can put the sword there as it was and pull it out again."

"That is no mastery," said Arthur; and so he put it in the stone. Therewith Sir Ector assayed to pull out the sword, and failed.



"Now assay," said Sir Ector to Sir Kay. And anon he pulled at the sword with all his might but it would not be. "Now shall ye assay," said Sir Ector to Arthur.

"I will well," said Arthur, and pulled it out easily. And therewithal Sir Ector kneeled down to the earth, and Sir Kay.

"Alas," said Arthur, "mine own dear father and brother, why kneel ye to me?"

"Nay, nay, my lord Arthur, it is not so: I was never your father nor of your blood, but I wote [*know*] well ye are of an higher blood than I weened [*thought*] ye were." And then Sir Ector told him all. Then Arthur made great moan when he understood that Sir Ector was not his father.

"Sir," said Ector unto Arthur, "will ye be my good and gracious lord when ye are king?"

"Else were I to blame," said Arthur, "for ye are the man in the world that I am most beholding [*obliged*] to, and my good lady and mother your wife, that as well as her own hath fostered and kept me. And if ever it be God's will that I be king, as ye say, ye shall desire of me what I may do, and I shall not fail you."

"Sir," said Sir Ector, "I will ask no more of you but that you will make my son, your fostered brother Sir Kay seneschal of all your lands."

"That shall be done, sir," said Arthur, "and more by the faith of my body; and never man shall have that office but he while that he and I live."

Therewithal they went unto the archbishop, and told him how the sword was achieved, and by whom. And upon the twelfth day all the barons came thither for to assay to take the sword. But there afore them all, there might none take it

out but only Arthur; wherefore there were many great lords wroth, and said, "It was great shame unto them all and the realm to be governed with a boy of no high blood born." And so they fell out at that time, that it was put off till Candlemas, and then all the barons should meet there again. But always the ten knights were ordained for to watch the sword both day and night; and so they set a pavilion over the stone and the sword, and five always watched. And at Candlemas many more great lords came thither for to have won the sword, but none of them might prevail. And right as Arthur did at Christmas he did at Candlemas, and pulled out the sword easily, whereof the barons were sore aggrieved, and put it in delay till the high feast of Easter. And as Arthur sped afore, so did he at Easter; and yet there were some of the great lords had indignation that Arthur should be their king, and put it off in delay till the feast of Pentecost.

And at the feast of Pentecost all manner of men assayed to pull at the sword that would assay, and none might prevail; but Arthur pulled it out afore all the lords and commons that were there, wherefore all the commons cried at once: "We will have Arthur unto our king; we will put him no more in delay; for we all see that it is God's will that he shall be our king, and who that holdeth against it we will slay him." And therewithal they kneeled down all at once, both rich and poor, and cried Arthur mercy, because they had delayed him so long. And Arthur forgave it them, and took the sword between both his hands, and offered it upon the altar where the archbishop was, and so was he made

knight of[1] the best man that was there. And so anon was the coronation made, and there was he sworn to the lords and commons for to be a true king, to stand with true justice from thenceforth all the days of this life. Also then he made all lords that held of the crown to come in, and to do service as they ought to do. And many complaints were made unto King Arthur of great wrongs that were done since the death of King Uther, of many lands that were bereaved of lords, knights, ladies and gentlemen. Wherefore King Arthur made the lands to be given again unto them that owned them. When this was done that the king had stablished all the countries about London, then he let make Sir Kay seneschal of England; and Sir Baudwin of Britain was made constable; and Sir Ulfius was made chamberlain; and Sir Brasias was made warden to wait upon the north from Trent forwards, for it was that time for the most part enemy to the king.

Then on a day there came into the court a squire on horseback, leading a knight before him wounded to the death, and told him there was a knight in the forest that had reared up a pavilion by a well [*spring*] side, "and hath slain my master, a good knight, and his name was Miles; wherefore I beseech you that my master may be buried, and that some good knight may revenge my master's death." Then was in the court great noise of the knight's death, and every man said his advice. Then came Griflet, that was but a squire, and he was but young, of the age of King Arthur, so he besought the king, for all his service that he had done, to give him the order of knighthood.

"Thou art full young and tender of age," said King Arthur, "for to take so high an order upon thee."

"Sir," said Griflet, "I beseech you to make me a knight."

"Sir," said Merlin, "it were pity to leese [*lose*] Griflet, for he will be a passing good man when he cometh to age, abiding with you the term of his life; and if he adventure his body with yonder knight at the fountain, he shall be in great peril if[2] ever he come again, for he is one of the best knights of the world, and the strongest man of arms."

"Well," said King Arthur. So, at the desire of Griflet, the king made him knight.

"Now," said King Arthur to Sir Griflet, "sithen [*since*] that I have made thee knight, thou must grant me a gift."

"What ye will, my lord," said Sir Griflet.

"Thou shalt promise me, by the faith of thy body, that when thou hast jousted with the knight at the fountain, whether it fall [*happen*] that ye be on foot or on horseback, that in the same manner ye shall come again unto me without any question or making any more debate."

"I will promise you," said Griflet, "as ye desire." Then Sir Griflet took his horse in great haste, and dressed his shield, and took a great spear in his hand, and so he rode a great gallop till he came to the fountain, and thereby he saw a rich pavilion, and thereby under a cloth stood a fair horse well saddled and bridled, and on a tree a shield of divers colors, and a great spear. Then Sir Griflet smote upon the shield with the end of his spear, that the shield fell down to the ground.

With that came the knight out of the pavilion, and said, "Fair knight, why smote ye down my shield?"

"For I will joust with you," said Sir Griflet.

"It were better ye did not," said the knight, "for ye are but young and late made knight, and your might is nothing to mine."

"As for that," said Sir Griflet, "I will joust with you."

"That is me loth," said the knight, "but sith [*since*] I must needs, I will dress me thereto; but of whence be ye?" said the knight.

"Sir, I am of King Arthur's court." So they ran together that Sir Griflet's spear all to-shivered [*shivered all to pieces*], and therewithal he smote Sir Griflet through the shield and the left side, and brake the spear, that the truncheon stuck in his body, that horse and knight fell down.

When the knight saw him lie so on the ground he alighted, and was passing heavy, for he wend [*weened*] he had slain him, and then he unlaced his helm and got him wind, and so with the truncheon he set him on his horse, and betook him to God, and said he had a mighty heart, and if he might live he would prove a passing good knight. And so Sir Griflet rode to the court, whereas great moan was made for him. But through good leeches [*surgeons*] he was healed and his life saved.

And King Arthur was passing wroth for the hurt of Sir Griflet. And by and by he commanded a man of his chamber that his best horse and armor "be without the city or [*before*] to-morrow day." Right so in the morning he met with his man and his horse, and so mounted up and dressed his shield, and took his spear, and bade his chamberlain tarry there till he came again. And so King Arthur rode but a

soft pace till it was day, and then was he ware of three churls which chased Merlin, and would have slain him. Then King Arthur rode unto them a good pace, and cried to them: "Flee, churls." Then were they afraid when they saw a knight, and fled away. "O Merlin," said King Arthur, "here hadst thou been slain for[3] all thy craft, had I not been."

"Nay," said Merlin, "not so, for I could save myself if I would, and thou art more near thy death than I am, for thou goest towards thy death, and[4] God be not thy friend."

So, as they went thus talking, they came to the fountain, and the rich pavilion by it. Then King Arthur was ware where a knight sat all armed in a chair. "Sir knight," said King Arthur, "for what cause abidest thou here? That there may no knight ride this way but if he do joust with thee?" said the king. "I rede [*advise*] thee leave that custom," said King Arthur.

"This custom," said the knight, "have I used and will use, maugre [*in spite of*] who saith nay; and who is grieved with my custom, let him amend it that will."

"I will amend it," said King Arthur.

"And I shall defend it," said the knight. Anon he took his horse, and dressed his shield, and took a spear, and they met so hard either on other's shield, that they all toshivered [*shivered all to pieces*] their spears. Therewith King Arthur drew his sword. "Nay, not so," said the knight, "it is fairer that we twain run more together with sharp spears."

"I will well," said King Arthur, "and [*if*] I had any mo [*more*] spears."

"I have spears enough," said the knight. So there came a squire, and brought two good spears, and King Arthur took

one and he another. So they spurred their horses, and came together with all their mights, that either brake their spears to their hands. Then Arthur set hand on his sword. "Nay," said the knight, "ye shall do better; ye are a passing good jouter as ever I met withal, and for the love of the high order of knighthood let us joust once again."

"I assent me," said King Arthur. Anon there were brought two great spears, and every knight gat a spear, and therewith they ran together that Arthur's spear all toshivered. But the other knight hit him so hard in midst of the shield that horse and man fell to the earth, and therewith Arthur was eager, and pulled out his sword, and said, "I will assay thee, Sir knight, on foot, for I have lost the honor on horseback."

"I will be on horseback," said the knight. Then was Arthur wroth, and dressed his shield towards him with his sword drawn. When the knight saw that, he alight, for him thought no worship to have a knight at such avail, he to be on horseback, and he on foot, and so he alight and dressed his shield unto Arthur. And there began a strong battle with many great strokes, and so hewed with their swords that the cantels [*pieces, of armor or of flesh*] flew in the fields, and much blood they bled both, that all the place there as they fought was over-bled with blood, and thus they fought long, and rested them, and then they went to the battle again, and so hurtled together like two rams that either fell to the earth. So at the last they smote together, that both their swords met even together. But the sword of the knight smote King Arthur's sword in two pieces, wherefore he was heavy. Then said the knight unto Arthur, "Thou art in my

danger whether me list to save thee or slay thee, and but thou yield thee as overcome and recreant thou shalt die."

"As for death," said King Arthur, "welcome be it when it cometh, but as to yield me to thee as recreant, I had liever die than to be so shamed." And there withal the king leapt unto Pellinore, and took him by the middle, and threw him down, and rased[5] off his helm. When the knight felt that, he was adread, for he was a passing big man of might, and anon he brought King Arthur under him, and rased off his helm, and would have smitten off his head.

Therewithal came Merlin, and said: "Knight, hold thy hand, for and [*if*] thou slay that knight, thou puttest this realm in the greatest damage that ever realm was in, for this knight is a man of more worship than thou wottest of."

"Why, who is he?" said the knight.

"It is King Arthur."

Then would he have slain him for dread of his wrath, and heaved up his sword, and therewith Merlin cast an enchantment on the knight, that he fell to the earth in a great sleep. Then Merlin took up King Arthur, and rode forth upon the knight's horse. "Alas," said King Arthur, "what hast thou done, Merlin? hast thou slain this good knight by thy crafts? There lived not so worshipful a knight as he was; I had liever than the stint [*loss*] of my land a year, that he were on[6] live."

"Care ye not," said Merlin, "for he is wholer than ye, for he is but on[7] sleep, and will awake within three hours. I told you," said Merlin, "what a knight he was; here had ye been slain had I not been. Also, there liveth not a better knight than he is, and he shall do you hereafter right good

service, and his name is Pellinore, and he shall have two sons, that shall be passing good men."

Right so the king and he departed, and went unto an hermit that was a good man and a great leech. So the hermit searched all his wounds and gave him good salves; and the king was there three days, and then were his wounds well amended that he might ride and go. So Merlin and he departed, and as they rode, Arthur said, "I have no sword."

"No force,"[8] said Merlin, "hereby is a sword that shall be yours, and [*if*] I may." So they rode till they came to a lake, which was a fair water and a broad, and in the midst of the lake King Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in the hand. "Lo," said Merlin, "yonder is that sword that I spake of." With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake.

"What damsel is that?" said Arthur.

"That is the Lady of the Lake," said Merlin; "and this damsel will come to you anon, and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword." Anon withal came the damsel unto Arthur and saluted him, and he her again.

"Damsel," said Arthur, "what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword."

"Sir king," said the damsel, "that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it."

"By my faith," said Arthur, "I will give you what gift ye will ask."

"Well," said the damsel, "go ye into yonder barge and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time."

So King Arthur and Merlin alighted and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, King Arthur took it up by the handles, and took it with him. And the arm and the hand went under the water; and so they came unto the land and rode forth. And then King Arthur saw a rich pavilion: "What signifieth yonder pavilion?"



*And when they came to the sword that the hand held,
King Arthur took it up*

"It is the knight's pavilion," said Merlin, "that ye fought with last, Sir Pellinore, but he is out, he is not there; he hath ado with a knight of yours, that hight [*was named*] Egglame, and they have fought together, but at the last Egglame fled, and else he had been dead, and he hath chased him to Caerleon, and we shall anon meet with him in the high way."

"It is well said," quoth King Arthur, "now have I a sword, and now will I wage battle with him and be avenged on him."

"Sir, ye shall not do so," said Merlin, "for the knight is weary of fighting and chasing, so that ye shall have no worship to have ado with him; also he will not lightly be matched of one knight living; and therefore my counsel is that ye let him pass, for he shall do you good service in short time, and his sons after his days. Also ye shall see that day in short space, that ye shall be right glad to give him your sister to wife."

"When I see him," said King Arthur, "I will do as ye advise me."

Then King Arthur looked upon the sword and liked it passing well.

"Whether liketh you better," said Merlin, "the sword or the scabbard?"

"Me liketh better the sword," said King Arthur.

"Ye are more unwise," said Merlin, "for the scabbard is worth ten of the sword, for while ye have the scabbard upon

you ye shall leese [*lose*] no blood be ye never so sore wounded, therefore keep well the scabbard alway with you."

So they rode on to Caerleon, and by the way they met with Sir Pellinore. But Merlin had done such a craft that Pellinore saw not Arthur, and so he passed by without any words.

"I marvel," said the king, "that the knight would not speak."

"Sir," said Merlin, "he saw you not, for and [*if*] he had seen you he had not lightly departed."

So they came unto Caerleon, whereof the knights were passing glad; and when they heard of his adventures, they marvelled that he would jeopard his person so alone. But all men of worship said it was merry to be under such a chieftain that would put his person in adventure as other poor knights did.

It befell on a time that King Arthur said to Merlin: "My barons will let me have no rest, but needs they will have that I take a wife, and I will none take but by thy counsel and by thine advice."

"It is well done," said Merlin, "that ye take a wife, for a man of your bounty and nobleness should not be without a wife. Now is there any fair lady that ye love better than another?"

"Yea," said King Arthur, "I love Guenever, the king's daughter Leodegrance[9] of the land of Cameliard, which Leodegrance holdeth in his house the Table Round that ye told he had of my father Uther. And this damsel is the most

gentlest and fairest lady that I know living, or yet that ever I could find."

And Merlin went forth to King Leodegrance of Cameliard, and told him of the desire of the king, that he would have to his wife Guenever his daughter.

"That is to me," said King Leodegrance, "the best tidings that ever I heard, that so worthy a king of prowess and of nobleness will wed my daughter. And as for my lands I will give him, wished I that it might please him, but he hath lands enough, he needeth none; but I shall send him a gift that shall please him much more, for I shall give him the Table Round, the which Utherpendragon gave me; and when it is full complete, there is an hundred knights and fifty, and as for an hundred good knights I have myself, but I lack fifty, for so many have been slain in my days."

And so King Leodegrance delivered his daughter Guenever unto Merlin, and the Table Round with the hundred knights; and so they rode freshly with great royalty, what by water and what by land, till they came that night unto London.



When King Arthur heard of the coming of Guenever and the hundred knights with the Table Round, he made great joy for their coming, and said openly, "This fair lady is passing welcome to me, for I loved her long, and therefore there is nothing so pleasing to me. And these knights with the Round Table please me more than right great riches."

Then in all haste the king did ordain for the marriage and the coronation in the most honorablest wise that could be devised.

"Now Merlin," said King Arthur, "go thou and espy me in all this land fifty knights which be of most prowess and worship."

Within short time Merlin had found such knights that should fulfil twenty and eight knights, but no more he could find. Then the bishop of Canterbury was fetched, and he blessed the sieges [*seats*] with great royalty and devotion, and there set the eight and twenty knights in their sieges.

And when this was done Merlin said, "Fair sirs, ye must all arise and come to King Arthur for to do him homage; he will have the better will to maintain you."

And so they arose and did their homage. And when they were gone Merlin found in every siege letters of gold that told the knights' names that had sitten therein. But two sieges were void.

"What is the cause," said King Arthur, "that there be two places void in the sieges?"

"Sir," said Merlin, "there shall no man sit in those places but they that shall be of most worship. But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow."

And therewith Merlin took King Pellinore by the hand, and, in the one hand next the two sieges and the Siege Perilous, he said in open audience, "This is your place, and best ye be worthy to sit therein of any that is here."



BOOK II

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OF SIR LAUNCELOT DU LAKE

Anon after that the noble and worthy King Arthur was come from Rome into England, all the knights of the Round Table resorted unto the king, and made many jousts and tournaments, and some there were that were good knights, which increased so in arms and worship that they passed all their fellows in prowess and noble deeds, and that was well proved on many, but especially it was proved on Sir Launcelot du Lake. For in all tournaments and jousts and deeds of arms, both for life and death, he passed all knights, and at no time he was never overcome, but it were by treason or enchantment. Wherefore Queen Guenever had him in great favor above all other knights, and certainly he loved the queen again above all other ladies and damsels all the days of his life, and for her he did many great deeds of arms, and saved her from the fire through his noble chivalry. Thus Sir Launcelot rested him a long while with play and game; and then he thought to prove himself in strange adventures. Then he bade his brother Sir Lionel to make him ready, "for we two will seek adventures."

So they mounted upon their horses armed at all points, and rode into a deep forest; and after they came into a great plain, and then the weather was hot about noon, and Sir Launcelot had great list [*desire*] to sleep.

Then Sir Lionel espied a great apple tree that stood by an hedge, and said: "Brother, yonder is a fair shadow, there may we rest us and our horses."

"It is well said, fair brother," said Sir Launcelot; "for of all this seven year I was not so sleepy as I am now."

And so they there alighted and tied their horses under sundry trees, and so Sir Launcelot laid him down under an apple tree, and his helm he laid under his head. And Sir Lionel waked while he slept. So Sir Launcelot was asleep passing fast. And in the mean while there came three knights riding, as fast fleeing as ever they might ride. And there followed them three but one knight. And when Sir Lionel saw him, him thought he saw never so great a knight nor so well faring a man, neither so well appavelled unto all rights. So within a while this strong knight had overtaken one of these knights, and there he smote him to the cold earth that he lay still. And then he rode unto the second knight, and smote him so that man and horse fell down. And then straight to the third knight he rode, and he smote him behind his horse's tail a spear's length. And then he alighted down, and reined his horse on the bridle, and bound all the three knights fast with the reins of their own bridles. When Sir Lionel saw him do thus, he thought to assay him, and made him ready, and stilly and privily he took his horse, and thought not for to awake Sir Launcelot. And when he was mounted upon his horse he overtook this strong knight and bade him turn: and the other smote Sir Lionel so hard that horse and man he bare to the earth, and so he alighted down and bound him fast, and threw him overthwart his own horse, and so he served them all four, and rode with them away to his own castle. And when he came there, he made unarm them, and beat them with thorns all naked,

and after put them in a deep prison where there were many more knights that made great dolor.

When Sir Ector de Maris wist that Sir Launcelot was past out of the court to seek adventures he was wroth with himself, and made him ready to seek Sir Launcelot, and as he had ridden long in a great forest, he met with a man that was like a forester. "Fair fellow," said Sir Ector, "knowest thou in this country any adventures that be here nigh hand?"

"Sir," said the forester, "this country know I well, and hereby within this mile is a strong manor, and well diked, and by that manor, on the left hand, there is a fair ford for horses to drink of, and over that ford there groweth a fair tree, and thereon hangeth many fair shields that wielded sometime good knights: and at the hole of the tree hangeth a basin of copper and laton [*brass*], and strike upon that basin with the butt of thy spear thrice, and soon after thou shalt hear new tidings, and else hast thou the fairest grace that many a year had ever knight that passed through this forest."

"Gramercy," [*thanks*] said Sir Ector, and departed and came to the tree, and saw many fair shields, and among them he saw his brother's shield, Sir Lionel, and many more that he knew that were his fellows of the Round Table, the which grieved his heart, and he promised to revenge his brother. Then anon Sir Ector beat on the basin as he were wood [*crazy*], and then he gave his horse drink at the ford: and there came a knight behind him and bade him come out of the water and make him ready; and Sir Ector anon turned

him shortly, and in fewter cast[10] his spear, and smote the other knight a great buffet that his horse turned twice about.

"This was well done," said the strong knight, "and knightly thou hast stricken me:" and therewith he rushed his horse on Sir Ector and caught him under his right arm, and bare him clean out of the saddle, and rode with him away into his own hall, and threw him down in the midst of the floor. The name of this knight was Sir Turquine. Then he said unto Sir Ector, "For thou hast done this day more unto me than any knight did these twelve years, now will I grant thee thy life, so thou wilt be sworn to be my prisoner all thy life-days."

"Nay," said Sir Ector, "that will I never promise thee, but that I will do mine advantage."

"That me repenteth," said Sir Turquine.

And then he made to unarm him, and beat him with thorns all naked, and after put him down in a deep dungeon, where he knew many of his fellows. But when Sir Ector saw Sir Lionel, then made he great sorrow.

"Alas, brother," said Sir Ector, "where is my brother Sir Launcelot?"

"Fair brother, I left him on sleep when that I from him went, under an apple tree, and what is become of him I cannot tell you."

"Alas," said the knights, "but Sir Launcelot help us we may never be delivered, for we know now no knight that is able to match our master Turquine."

Now leave we these knights prisoners, and speak we of Sir Launcelot du Lake that lieth under the apple tree sleeping. Even about the noon there came by him four queens of great estate; and, for the heat of the sun should not annoy them, there rode four knights about them and bare a cloth of green silk on four squares, betwixt them and the sun, and the queens rode on four white mules.

Thus as they rode they heard by them a great horse grimly neigh, and then were they ware of a sleeping knight that lay all armed under an apple tree; anon as these queens looked on his face they knew that it was Sir Launcelot. Then they began for to strive for that knight; every one said she would have him to her love.

"We shall not strive," said Morgan le Fay that was King Arthur's sister; "I shall put an enchantment upon him that he shall not awake in six hours, and then I will lead him away unto my castle, and when he is surely within my hold I shall take the enchantment from him, and then let him choose which of us he will have for his love."

So this enchantment was cast upon Sir Launcelot, and then they laid him upon his shield, and bare him so on horseback betwixt two knights, and brought him unto the castle Chariot, and there they laid him in a chamber cold, and at night they sent unto him a fair damsel with his supper ready dight. By that the enchantment was past, and when she came she saluted him, and asked him what cheer?

"I cannot say, fair damsel," said Sir Launcelot, "for I wot not how I came into this castle but it be by an enchantment."

"Sir," said she, "ye must make good cheer, and if ye be such a knight as is said ye be, I shall tell you more to-morn [*to-morrow*] by prime [*the first hour*] of the day."

"Gramercy, fair damsel," said Sir Launcelot, "of your good will I require you."

And so she departed. And there he lay all that night without comfort of anybody.

And on the morn early came these four queens, passingly well beseen, all they bidding him good morn, and he them again.

"Sir knight," the four queens said, "thou must understand thou art our prisoner, and we here know thee well, that thou art Sir Launcelot du Lake, King Ban's son. And truly we understand your worthiness that thou art the noblest knight living; and therefore thee behoveth now to choose one of us four. I am the Queen Morgan le Fay, Queen of the land of Gore, and here is the Queen of Northgalis, and the Queen of Eastland, and the Queen of the Out Isles; now choose ye one of us which thou wilt have to thy love, for thou mayst not choose or else in this prison to die."

"This is an hard case," said Sir Launcelot, "that either I must die or else choose one of you, yet had I liever to die in this prison with worship, than to have one of you to my love maugre my head. And therefore ye be answered, for I will have none of you, for ye be false enchantresses."

"Well," said the queens, "is this your answer, that you will refuse us?"

"Yea, upon my life," said Sir Launcelot, "refused ye be of me."

So they departed, and left him there alone that made great sorrow.

Right so at noon came the damsel to him, and brought him his dinner, and asked him what cheer.

"Truly, fair damsel," said Sir Launcelot, "in all my life-days never so ill."

"Sir," said she, "that me repenteth; but and ye will be ruled by me, I shall help you out of this distress, and ye shall have no shame nor villany, so that ye hold me a promise."

"Fair damsel, that I will grant you, and sore I am afeared of these queen's witches, for they have destroyed many a good knight."

"Sir," said she, "that is sooth, and for the renown and bounty they hear of you, they would have your love, and, sir, they say that your name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, the flower of all the knights that been living, and they been passing wroth with you that ye have refused them; but, sir, and ye would promise me for to help my father on Tuesday next coming, that hath made a tournament between him and the King of Northgalis; for the Tuesday last past my father lost the field through three knights of King Arthur's court, and if ye will be there upon Tuesday next coming and help my father, to-morrow or [ere] prime, by the grace of God, I shall deliver you clean."

"Fair maiden," said Sir Launcelot, "tell me what is your father's name, and then shall I give you an answer."

"Sir knight," said the damsel, "my father is King Bagdemagus, that was foully rebuked at the last tournament."

"I know your father well," said Sir Launcelot, "for a noble king and a good knight, and by the faith of my body, ye shall have my body ready to do your father and you service at that day."

"Sir," said the damsel, "gramercy, and to-morrow await that ye be ready betimes, and I shall deliver you; and take you your armor and your horse, shield, and spear; and hereby within these ten miles is an abbey of white monks, and there I pray you to abide, and thither shall I bring my father unto you."

"All this shall be done," said Sir Launcelot, "as I am a true knight."

And so she departed, and came on the morrow early and found him ready. Then she brought him out of twelve locks, and brought him unto his armor. And when he was all armed and arrayed, she brought him unto his own horse, and lightly he saddled him, and took a great spear in his hand, and so rode forth, and said, "Fair damsel, I shall not fail you, by the grace of God."

And so he rode into a great forest all that day, and in no wise could he find any highway, and so the night fell on him, and then was he ware in a slade [*glade*] of a pavilion of red sendall.[\[11\]](#) "By my faith," said Sir Launcelot, "in that pavilion will I lodge all this night." And so there he alighted down, and tied his horse to the pavilion, and there he unarmed him, and found there a rich bed and laid him therein, and anon he fell on sleep.

So thus within a while the night passed and the day appeared, and then Sir Launcelot armed him and mounted upon his horse, and took his leave, and they showed him

the way towards the abbey, and thither they rode within the space of two hours.

As soon as Sir Launcelot came within the abbey yard, King Bagdemagus' daughter heard a great horse go on the pavement. And then she arose and went unto a window, and there she saw that it was Sir Launcelot, and anon she made men hastily to go to him, which took his horse and led him into a stable, and himself was led into a fair chamber, and there he unarmed him, and the lady sent to him a long gown, and anon she came herself. And then she made Sir Launcelot passing good cheer, and she said he was the knight in the world that was most welcome to her. Then she in all the haste sent for her father King Bagdemagus, that was within twelve miles of that abbey, and before even he came with a fair fellowship of knights with him. And when the king was alighted from his horse, he went straight unto Sir Launcelot's chamber, and there found his daughter, and then the king embraced Sir Launcelot in his arms, and either made other good cheer. Anon Sir Launcelot made his complaint unto the king how he was betrayed, and how his brother Sir Lionel was departed from him he wist not whither, and how his daughter had delivered him out of prison, "wherefore I shall while I live do her service and all her friends and kindred."

"Then am I sure of your help," said the king, "now on Tuesday next coming?"

"Ye, sir," said Sir Launcelot, "I shall not fail you, for so have I promised unto my lady, your daughter. As I hear say that the tournament shall be within this three mile of this

abbey, ye shall send unto me three knights of yours such as ye trust, and look that the three knights have all white shields, and I also, and no painture on the shields, and we four will come out of a little wood in the midst of both parties, and we shall fall in the front of our enemies and grieve them that we may; and thus shall I not be known what knight I am." So they took their rest that night, and this was on the Sunday. And so the king departed, and sent unto Sir Launcelot three knights, with the four white shields.

And on the Tuesday they lodged them in a little leaved wood beside where the tournament should be. And there were scaffolds that lords and ladies might behold, and to give the prize. Then came into the field the King of Northgalis with eightscore helms. And then the three knights of Arthur stood by themselves. Then came into the field King Bagdemagus with fourscore of helms. And then they fewtred [*placed in rest*] their spears, and came together with a great dash, and there were slain of knights, at the first encounter, twelve of King Bagdemagus' party, and six of the King of Northgalis' party, and King Bagdemagus' party was far set aback.

With that came Sir Launcelot du Lake, and he thrust in with his spear in the thickest of the press, and there he smote down with one spear five knights, and of four of them he brake their backs. And in that throng he smote down the King of Northgalis, and brake his thigh in that fall. All this doing of Sir Launcelot saw the three knights of Arthur.

"Yonder is a shrewd guest," said Sir Mador de la Porte, "therefore have here once at him."